

Chair James Frank, Representative Toni Rose and members of the committee, my name is Michele Rountree, from Austin and I'm here to testify as a private citizen in favor of HB 133 to extend Medicaid from 60 days to one year after pregnancy. My affiliations include I am an Associate Professor, UT Austin Steve Hicks School of Social Work and Founder, Black Mamas ATX a local non-profit that envisions a world without maternal health disparities by reducing and eliminating the alarming maternal mortality and morbidity rates disproportionately impacting Black mothers in Central Texas. When we help the most vulnerable of us we are all helped.

A central finding to Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee's (2020) most recent report:

Disparities persist in maternal mortality. Non-Hispanic Black women are disproportionately impacted.

*<sup>1</sup>Among reviewed 2013 cases identified as pregnancy-related, 31 percent of deaths were among Non-Hispanic Black women, 41 percent among Non-Hispanic White women, 26 percent among Hispanic women, and 2 percent among women of other races and ethnicities. In contrast, 11 percent of live births in 2013 were among Non-Hispanic Black women, 34 percent among Non-Hispanic White women, 48 percent among Hispanic women, and 6 percent among women of other races and ethnicities."*

The Texas Legislature would help Texas make great strides in reducing maternal health disparities by extending Medicaid benefits from 60 days to a full year. HB 133 is life-saving for mothers. The cost to families and communities of losing mothers to mostly preventable pregnancy-related complications can be changed. Extending Medicaid coverage will provide mothers with essential comprehensive health care for a full year, attending to and preventing pregnancy complications during the postpartum period.

<sup>2</sup>The uninsured are less likely than those with insurance to receive preventive care and services for major health conditions and chronic diseases. What would extending Medicaid benefits for the full year look like for mom?: on-going support, follow-up on pregnancy complications such as hemorrhage and cardiac issues, management of chronic health conditions, access to family planning, and assessment and treatment of mental health conditions, such as postpartum depression, this is significant since mothers on Medicaid are 25% more likely than mothers with private insurance to report postpartum depressive symptoms.<sup>3</sup> Black women are at a higher risk for mental health issues post-birth, and less likely to get the help they need<sup>4</sup>, in addition the postpartum period can also be a susceptible time for substance use relapse for moms in recovery. A 2020 study found that Medicaid expansion was associated with lower maternal mortality rates compared to non-expansion states.<sup>5</sup> I recently did a radio show and the announcer asked me what was the good news- the good news is possible to improve maternal outcomes and eliminate these disparities. HB 133 has the potential to keep more Texas mothers from dying.

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<sup>1</sup> Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Task Force and Department of State Health Services Joint Biennial Report. (Dec.. 2020) Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee Report (texas.gov)

<sup>2</sup> Christopher, A. S., McCormick, D., Woolhandler, S., Himmelstein, D. U., Bor, D. H., & Wilper, A. P. (2016). Access to Care and Chronic Disease Outcomes Among Medicaid-Insured Persons Versus the Uninsured. *American journal of public health*, 106(1), 63–69. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302925>

<sup>3</sup> D'Angelo, D. V., Williams, L., Harrison, L., & Ahluwalia, I. B. (2012). Health status and health insurance coverage of women with live-born infants: an opportunity for preventive services after pregnancy. *Maternal and child health journal*, 16 Suppl 2(0 2), 222–230. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-012-1172-y>

<sup>4</sup> American Society of Anesthesiologists (2018). Postpartum depression linked to mother's pain after childbirth: New study underscores importance of managing pain during recovery, Science Daily, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Eliason, E. (2020) Adoption of Medicaid Expansion Is Associated with Lower Maternal Mortality,